

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2
 William Martin Leake
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

TRAVELS
 IN
 THE MOREA.

FIRST JOURNEY.

CHAPTER XII.

ARCADIA.

Temple of Apollo Epicurius at BASSÆ.—From the temple to Andrítzena.—Karítēna.—Sinánu.—MEGALOPOLIS.—To Londári and Tripolitzá.

MAY 7.—At 1.5 I set out for the ruins of the temple of Apollo Epicurius, for which the natives have no other name than that of the *Columns*, *στοὺς στυλοὺς*, as they are here more Hellenically called: our Greeks from Kalamáta used the Italian word *κολόνναις*. We soon begin to ascend Mount *Cotylium*, which is therefore correctly placed by Pausanias at a distance of forty stades from Phigaleia; for though the temple is at least a two hours' walk of a man or horse from the ruins of the city, we may be al-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

lowed to apply the forty stades to the nearest part of the mountain on which the temple stands. After ascending for half an hour through pasture land, in which there are some sheep-folds^a belonging to Tragóï, we enter the forest of oaks which covers the summit of all these ridges. The path winds among the trees for half an hour, when I am suddenly startled from the indolent reverie which such a pleasant but unexciting kind of road often produces, by the sight of one of the component cylinders of a Doric shaft of enormous size, lying half buried in earth and decayed leaves, on a level spot, by the road side, just wide enough to hold it. A detached fragment of this kind sometimes gives a greater impression of grandeur than an entire building, or the ruin of a large portion of one, because in these the dimensions of the parts are lost in the harmony of the whole; even the magnitude of a perfect building is not felt unless there is some vulgar object at hand to form a scale of comparison: as a St. Peter's or a St. Paul's would fail of producing their just effect without houses and churches in sight, or as the Pyramids of Memphis seldom impress the traveller with their immensity as long as he has nothing but hills to compare them with, and until he is near enough to judge of the size of

^a μάνδραις.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the masses of stone of which they are formed, by the scale of his own height. I had no conception, until I had measured the fallen piece of column on the ascent to *Bassæ*, that its diameter was scarcely the half of that of the columns of the Parthenon. About 150 yards farther I came in sight of the ruined temple. The cylinder belonged undoubtedly to the column which stood at the south-western angle of the peristyle, one of the pieces of which rolled down the hill when the column fell.

The large proportions of these ruins, and the perfection of their workmanship, prove them to be the remains of the temple of Apollo Epicurius, though it is only from the few words which Pausanias bestows upon the temple that we obtain that certainty. Without those few words, the existence of such a magnificent building in such a wilderness, must ever have remained a subject of wonder, doubt, and discussion. As to a description of this fine ruin, the first in preservation of the temples of Greece, except the Theseium, it must be left to the painter and the architect; for the latter in particular there would be sufficient employment for some weeks. Indeed until some attempt be made to clear away the ruins of the cell, which form an immense confused mass within the peristyle, it will hardly be possible even for an

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

BASSÆ.

[CHAP. XII.

architect to understand thoroughly all the particulars of the building.

In general terms the temple may be described as a peripteral hypæthral hexastyle, with fifteen columns on the sides, 126 feet in length, 48 broad, and facing nearly north and south. The columns are three feet eight inches in diameter at the base, and twenty feet high, including the capital. As usual in peripteral temples, there were two columns in the pronaos and as many in the posticum, so that the total number in the peristyle was forty-two, of which thirty-six are standing, and, with one exception only, covered with their architraves. There are twenty shallow flutings in the shafts, as usual in the Doric order. As they measure only three feet under the capital, and are five times the lower diameter in height, they are both more tapering and shorter in proportion to their height than the columns of the Parthenon. As a necessary consequence of their being more tapering, the echinus of the capital is longer than in the Athenian temple, and forms a more acute angle with the plinth, the order thus more resembling the examples of the Doric at Corinth, and in the ruins of Sicily and Pæstum. There were several projections on either side of the cell, terminating in fluted Ionic semi-columns: one of these is standing, and it is the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

only part, either of the cell, or pronaos, or posticum, that is in that condition, though all the lower part of the cell is still in situ. Of the outer columns of the peristyle, on the contrary, all are standing, except the two angular columns of the southern front; nor are these wanting, as all the component cylinders are lying on the ground, so that both the peristyle and the cell might be restored to their original state without much deficiency, if wealth and power, taste and science should ever be restored to Greece.

The stone of which the temple is constructed is a hard yellowish-brown lime-stone^a, susceptible of a high polish, which explains the obser-

^a Baron Haller and Mr. Cockerell have since discovered the frize, which is now in the British Museum, representing battles of Centaurs and of Amazons with Greeks. For a delineation of these sculptures, and an able elucidation of them by Mr. Taylor Combe, see the Description of the Marbles of the British Museum, Part 3. By the excavation which followed the discovery of the frize, the complete plan of the temple was ascertained. It was found that the frize, the capitals of the Ionic semi-columns, and that of a single column which occupied a si-

tuation at the end of the cell, were of white marble. This last-mentioned column is a very curious specimen of art, being a variety of the Ionic order, with helices and leaves of acanthus, and consequently the earliest specimen of the order, which, having been first executed at Corinth, was called Corinthian. It is remarkable that Vitruvius, l. 4. c. 1., ascribes the invention of the order to Callimachus, who lived about the same time that the temple at Bassæ was built, having made the golden lamp and brazen palm-tree in the temple of Minerva Polias at Athens.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6

BASSÆ.

[CHAP. XII.]

vation of Pausanias, that this temple was superior in harmony^a to all the temples of the Peloponnesus, except that of Tegea, for it is evident, from other passages^b, that by *ἀρμονία* he meant the nice adaptation of the stones to each other, or, in other words, the fine execution of the masonry, and not the general harmony of the proportions of the temple. It may easily be conceived that such workmanship would be most finished in a temple of white marble, like that of Minerva Alea at Tegea, and least so in a building of soft conchite lime-stone, like that of the temple of Jupiter at Olympia; and this accords with the order of the three temples as to harmony in the idea of Pausanias, namely, first the Tegeatic, next the Phigaleian, and lastly the Olympian. In the temple of Apollo Epicurius, as in the Parthenon, the stones are wrought and adjusted to one another with such accuracy that the junctures in some places are not visible without the closest inspection; in others the superficial decomposition of the edges has formed a natural cement uniting the stones together.

Although the Phigalenses made a present of

^a ἀρμονίας εἶνεκεν.

^b Particularly in the following description of the walls of Tiryns:—λίθια ἐνὴρ-

μοσταὶ πάλαι, ὡς μάλιστα αὐτῶν ἕκαστον ἀρμονίαν τοῖς μεγάλαις λίθοις εἶσι.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. XII.]

BASSÆ.

7

their colossal statue of Apollo Epicurius to the city of Megalopolis, only seventy years after his temple was built, this removal does not appear to have taken place in consequence of any disaster which had dilapidated the building. The remark of Pausanias on its roof shews that it remained uninjured until his time. The cause of its present state of ruin one cannot well imagine to have been any other than the repetition of those concussions of the earth to which Greece is so subject,—which at first sight seem sufficient to have prevented the Greeks from having ever made any great advances in architecture, but which may perhaps in reality, by obliging them to encounter difficulties and to study solidity, have been one of the causes of their excellence in the art: in fact, though earthquakes are very frequent in this country, they seldom occur with such violence that a single shock would cause irreparable damage in buildings so well constructed as those of the Greeks; as far therefore as their destruction has been the effect of these concussions, it has rather been caused by a repetition of shocks upon former injuries left unrepaired in consequence of that neglect of the public monuments, which increased as the power, and wealth, and spirit of the nation declined. At Athens two or three explosions of gunpowder destroyed in an in-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8

BASSÆ.

[CHAP. XII.]

stant what the successive earthquakes of twenty-two centuries had left uninjured. The mode adopted by Ictinus, the architect of the temple at Bassæ, to prevent the horizontal motion of the earth from separating the component cylinders of the columns was, to fill up a cavity left in the centre of two adjoining cylinders with a piece of lead. I could not find any of the lead, but the peasants informed me they had often taken pieces away. In the Parthenon the wood of the juniper, which is still called by its ancient name *Κέδρος* (cedar), was used for the same purpose, as well as lead, and I believe sometimes iron.

The preservation of all the parts of the temple shews that the ruins have never been plundered for the sake of building materials. Indeed there is little temptation to transport these immense masses over such mountains as surround them, nor even to break them into smaller stones, by which barbarous process many other Hellenic remains have been destroyed, for there is no inhabited place nearer than Sklirú, a small village, distant about one mile and a half from the temple, on a part of the mountain where the ground is a little more level than in most other parts, and where alone there seems any possibility of cultivating corn.

There is certainly nothing in Greece, beyond

the bounds of Attica, more worthy of notice than these remains. The temple of Ægina in some of its accidents or accompaniments may be more picturesque, and the surrounding prospect more agreeable; but undoubtedly there are many persons who will prefer the severe grandeur, the wildness, and the variety of this Arcadian scene, in which, amidst a continued contrast of rugged mountain, forest, and cultivated land, there is no want of objects interesting to the spectator by their historical recollection. That which forms, on reflection, the most striking circumstance of all, is the nature of the surrounding country, capable of producing little else than pasture for cattle, and offering no conveniences for the display of commercial industry either by sea or land. If it excites our astonishment that the inhabitants of such a district should have had the refinement to delight in works of this kind, it is still more wonderful that they should have had the means to execute them. This can only be accounted for by what Horace says of the early Romans:

*Privatus illis census erat brevis,
 Commune magnum^a.*

This is the true secret of national power, which cannot be equally effective in an age of selfish luxury.

^a *Carm.* l. 2. od. 15,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02017-6 - Travels in the Morea, Volume 2

William Martin Leake

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10

RIVER NEDA.

[CHAP. XII.]

Mount *Cotylium* branches from the great *Lycæan* ridge, between the summits Dhiofórti and Fanarítiko, the former of which is in a line with Karítēna, the latter more to the northward. The summit of *Cotylium* looks down to the westward on the hollow watered by the torrent which flows between Tragóï and Puikádhēs, and eastward into a more deep and narrow valley, which receives the waters from about Sklirú. The stream which is collected from the latter feeders is that which I crossed yesterday, at 3 P.M., just above its junction with the branch which flows from Tetrázi and from some fountains between that mountain and Ambelióna. Thus we have three streams contributing to form the river which passes near the ruins of Phigaleia. Pausanias in like manner speaks of three tributaries of the Neda, namely, the *Lymax*, which joined the Neda about twelve stades above Phigaleia, the *Plataniston*, which the traveller coming from Megalopolis by Despœna crossed at thirty stades short of Phigaleia, and the *Neda Proper*, which had its origin in Mount Cerausium. The two distances here given by Pausanias shew that the *Lymax* was the river of Tragóï, and that the *Plataniston* was that which descends from the hollows about Sklirú, into the glen on the eastern side of Mount *Cotylium*: consequently, that the proper *Neda* was that which has its origin in